



Storage Water Use  
Policy Statement  
Adopted June 21, 2016

Impoundment of water is an active management strategy for a scarce resource which can allow for its use during times of shortage. However, storage substantially changes the natural hydrograph of rivers and profoundly changes watersheds. Numerous ponds and reservoirs have been constructed within Pitkin County, often not where hydrologically or environmentally sensible, resulting in degradation to the environment where the structures are sited. Additionally, storage water rights are associated with increased evaporation, as well as changes to water temperature, wildlife habitat, and water quality.

Recognizing the harm associated with development of new storage facilities, as well as the potential of storage to provide needed water supply resiliency during times of shortage, use of existing storage structures should be fully utilized before construction of new storage. Climate change is occurring and will exacerbate the stochastic nature of water supply timing and allocation. Given that the effects of climate change are unknown, there is a need for flexibility and varied response to expected changing hydrologic conditions. Use of existing storage facilities presents a resource to address such changes. Accordingly, the Healthy Rivers Board:

1. Supports using storage water rights to benefit in-channel protective flows only if adverse impacts are adequately mitigated.
2. Supports action by the State and Division Engineer requiring decrees and decree compliance for storage water rights.
3. Supports the expansion of existing storage facilities prior to the development of new storage facilities.
4. Opposes the construction of new storage facilities within the Crystal River watershed.
5. Opposes the diversion of water for out of basin storage.
6. Opposes the use of water stored in basin for later out of basin use.
7. Discourages the construction and use of aesthetic water features.